



# Anti-Apartheid Bill Heads for a Partisan Fate

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee in early September went through the motions of debating a South Africa sanctions bill, setting the stage for a party-line vote supporting it on Sept. 14.

Members of both parties acknowledged that the ultimate fate of the measure this year is all but certain. Once approved by the committee, the bill may reach the Senate floor briefly by late September but stands no chance of becoming law. Even if passed by the Senate — an uncertain prospect given the likelihood of a filibuster by opponents — the bill would be vetoed by President Reagan.

Senate Democrats clearly wanted the sanctions bill as an issue to clobber Republicans in an election year. Republicans, for their part, appear to hope the issue gets as little public attention as possible. To that end, the Republicans dropped plans to offer amendments that would weaken the bill. One opponent, Daniel J. Evans, R-Wash., said Republicans feared that Democrats might accept some of the amendments, making the bill more “acceptable” and therefore more difficult to oppose.

The House on Aug. 11 passed a sanctions bill (HR 1580) that would cut off nearly all trade between the United States and South Africa, including forcing American businesses to withdraw from South Africa within six months to a year. (*Weekly Report* p. 2294)

Senate sponsors on Sept. 7 introduced a companion version (S 256) making only modest changes in the House-passed bill.

The Foreign Relations Committee was scheduled to start work on the measure Sept. 8, but failed to attract a quorum. Chairman Claiborne Pell, D-R.I., scheduled another session the next day, but again too few members showed up to conduct any business. Instead, senators argued about the politics of the issue.

At the urging of ranking Republican Jesse Helms, N.C., the panel scheduled a final vote on the bill for



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**A central question: how to promote the rights of South Africa's blacks?**

Sept. 14, leaving little if any time for action on amendments. But senators and aides said few members had any interest in stretching out work on the bill since the conclusion was certain.

## Focus on Pretoria — or Polls?

Congress enacted a mild sanctions bill into law in 1986 — over Reagan's veto — with broad support from members of both parties. But this year, only a handful of Republicans have agreed to support the Democratic drive for tougher sanctions.

In spite of the dismal prospect for enactment, Democrats insisted that debating the measure was an important means of sending a “signal” to the white-minority government in Pretoria that U.S. pressure will continue.

“At this point there is just no other option I see other than sanctions,” said Paul Simon, D-Ill., who visited South Africa during the August congressional recess.

Sanctions supporters released a report by the General Accounting Office showing that limited sanctions imposed by Congress in 1986 have — along with international market forces — sharply curtailed South Africa's exports and damaged its economy.

Republicans insisted that Demo-

crats merely were engaging in election-year politics by forcing votes on a bill that has taken on the political character of a domestic civil rights issue. “Domestic election politics can do harm to a foreign policy,” said Evans.

Republicans also argued that Congress should not foreclose the options of the next president, regardless of whether he will be Republican George Bush, who opposes sanctions, or Democrat Michael S. Dukakis, who favors them. “To terminate all alternatives puts a very considerable burden on that president,” said Richard G. Lugar, R-Ind.

In spite of the sharp partisan cleavage on the issue, it was clear that not all Democrats were comfortable with the bill before the committee, and that several Republicans were nervous about being seen as doing a favor for the Pretoria government.

Chairman Pell opened committee action by saying he would support legislation “along these lines” even though “I question the wisdom of revisiting this issue” now. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn., acknowledged that “this isn't a perfect piece of legislation,” and appealed to Republicans to cooperate in improving it.

Nearly all the Republicans on the panel went to great lengths to stress opposition to apartheid and to denounce the government of South Africa. They said they questioned only the blunt instrument — sanctions — that Democrats seek to use against Pretoria, rather than the goal of promoting the rights of the black majority.

“If I felt this legislation would bring an end to apartheid . . . I would support it,” said Nancy Landon Kassebaum, R-Kan., a key figure in enacting the 1986 sanctions. But a total trade embargo would be counterproductive, she said, adding: “I never thought it was wise to bring South Africa to its knees.”

## Procedural Squabble

As often happens in the sharply divided Foreign Relations panel, members started their work on the sanctions bill with a procedural squabble.

Helms and other Republicans

—By John Felton

## FOREIGN POLICY NOTES: Pullback on Contra Aid ...

The Reagan administration appears to be leaning against asking Congress for speedy action this fall on a separate package of aid to the Nicaraguan contras.

The administration hesitation makes it highly unlikely that Congress will act this year to give the contras new weapons and other military supplies. Instead, Congress probably will approve only a six-month supply of food, medicine and other "humanitarian" aid to the contras, who are battling the leftist regime in Managua.

Congressional and administration sources said the White House is backing away from a plan by some Republicans to try to force Congress to vote by late September on a request by President Reagan for additional military and non-military aid. One reason, said Rep. Mickey Edwards, R-Okla., may be that advisers to presidential candidate George Bush believe that a bruising contra-aid battle would not benefit the GOP this fall.

Edwards and several other pro-contra Republicans had wanted Reagan to submit his own aid request in hopes of getting Congress to act. They asked Reagan to cite a promise made last March by House Speaker Jim Wright, D-Texas, and Senate Majority Leader Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., that they would seek quick action on a Reagan request for further aid to the contras. To invoke that commitment, Reagan would have to certify that the Sandinistas are violating a cease-fire accord signed last March 23 and that the contras are abiding by it.

The best option now for contra-aid supporters, Edwards said, is to press for "improvements" to a contra aid package that the Senate attached on Aug. 10 to the fiscal 1989 defense appropriations bill (HR 4781). The administration insists several restrictions mandated by the Senate will make it difficult to deliver the non-military aid to the few thousand contras remaining in Nicaragua. (*Weekly Report* p. 2285)

The vast majority of contra fighters have left Nicaragua and are encamped in neighboring Honduras, waiting for Congress to decide whether to renew military aid.

But Edwards said he saw little prospect for renewal of arms supplies. The Senate proposal would allow the administration to release some \$16.5 million worth of stockpiled military gear to the contras — but only after Congress took a follow-up vote approving that step. Edwards and congressional Democrats said there simply is not enough time left in this fall's session for such a vote.

"At this moment, there is no possibility of lethal aid

until the next administration," he said. "It is a question of keeping the contras alive" so the next president can decide which policy to pursue toward Nicaragua.

## ... and a Rebuke of Iraq

The Senate Sept. 9 voted to impose sanctions on Iraq — including a cutoff of some \$800 million annually in credits — to protest that country's alleged use of poison gas against its Kurdish minority.

Passage, by voice vote, of a bill (S 2763) imposing the sanctions represented a remarkably fast and serious response to human-rights violations overseas. Congress often passes resolutions condemning acts by foreign governments but rarely takes such a strong step so quickly.

In addition to condemning Iraq, the bill would suspend all forms of government aid to Baghdad, including loans and loan guarantees. Iraq currently receives about \$600 million a year in Commodity Credit Corporation guarantees and about \$200 million in credits from the Export-Import Bank, according to the staff of the Foreign Relations Committee. The bill also requires U.S. representatives to international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, to vote against all loans to Iraq. And it would bar sales to Iraq of any items — such as high-technology computers — that are subject to U.S. government licenses.

The president could waive the sanctions only by certifying to Congress that Iraq is not committing genocide against the Kurds and is not using chemical weapons.

Sponsoring the bill, Committee Chairman Claiborne Pell, D-R.I., said Iraq is engaging in "a campaign that can only be described as genocide against its Kurdish population. It is truly a crime against humanity." The bill says Iraq has "undertaken a campaign to depopulate the Kurdish regions ... by destroying all Kurdish villages in a large part of northern Iraq and by killing the civilian population."

Meeting on Sept. 8 with Iraqi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Saddoun Hammadi, Secretary of State George P. Shultz condemned Iraq's "unjustifiable and abhorrent" use of poison gas against the Kurds. The State Department earlier that day said the United States had received convincing evidence that Iraq had used the gas weapons. Hammadi, however, told reporters that the allegation was "absolutely baseless."

—By John Felton

alleged that the Democrats had snubbed a request by Secretary of State George P. Shultz to testify on the issue. While saying Shultz would receive a "warm welcome" any time by the committee, Pell said the secretary had asked only to appear privately before the Democrats — a request Pell said was not "appropriate."

Behind that dispute was an apparent effort by the State Department to postpone committee action on the bill at least until after a round of talks over

the future of Angola and Namibia.

The State Department complained that committee action would endanger the negotiations, conducted Sept. 7-8 in Brazzaville, Congo. Charles W. Freeman Jr., deputy assistant secretary of state for African affairs, said that U.S.-mediated talks among South Africa, Angola and Cuba were at "an extremely delicate stage" and that congressional action on sanctions might cause the participants to "harden their positions." The talks are aimed at ar-

ranging South Africa's withdrawal from Namibia and the withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola.

Committee Democrats rejected Freeman's assertion. Alan Cranston, D-Calif., noted that previous negotiating sessions produced a cease-fire and resulted in South Africa's withdrawal from the southern region of Angola even though the House was debating and approving the sanctions legislation. "These events have occurred simultaneously," Cranston said.